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GREENLAND AND ITS STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE (GROENLAND UND
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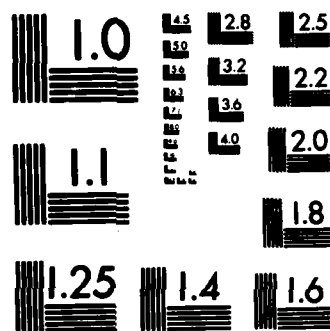
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Greenland And Its Strategic Importance

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A Danish Admiral and longtime "Island Commander Greenland" examines with this article the history of Greenland, its current strategic importance for NATO and the efforts which Denmark constantly makes for maintaining and developing the largest island in the world.

Historical Background

In order to understand why the huge island of Greenland, which is almost 2,000 sea miles distant from its small motherland, is also a part of the Kingdom of Denmark, we have to go back 1,000 years in history.

At this time, coming from Canada (Elles mere Island), the last of several waves of Eskimos* emigrated to the northern part of the West-

* The indigenous Eskimos in Canada, Alaska and Greenland prefer to call themselves Inuit, i.e. "people". The official name of Greenland in the Inuit language is "Kalaallit Nunaat".

Greenland coastal region. From here they moved on the west coast to the south and on the north coast to the north and from there on the east coast to the south.

While this was occurring in the north, a Scandinavian of Norwegian origin landed in the south. His name was Erik Thorvaldsen, called Erik The Red. Convicted of murder, he had been declared an "outlaw" in Iceland and therefore made a journey to the west in order to explore this area, whose existence had been known for almost 200 years.

After he had determined that the region was suitable for agriculture and cattle, he returned to Iceland, where in 985 he organized his colonization fleet of 25 ships, which carried between 600 and 700 people with their goods and cattle. However, only 14 ships reached the green and fertile fjords in the south in the vicinity of the current Julianhåb (Qaqortoq)*, the area which was also later known by the name Eastern Settlement.

* In all media the Inuit designations are used. Weather reports are an exception, where both Danish and Greenlandic letters are used.

During the following centuries the Scandinavians expanded to the north and established the Western Settlement in the current vicinity of Godthåbfjord. The total population of the Scandinavians was an estimated 4,000 to 5,000 people. Remains of their farms and churches still survive today*.

* To date the remains of 20 churches and approximately 300 farms have been identified.

In 1261 King Hakon Hakonson of Norway united all Scandinavian settlements in the North Atlantic under the crown of Norway.

Upon the death of the Norwegian King Hakon V in 1380 Norway was united with Denmark under Hakon's son Oluf, who had been elected Danish King in 1376. When Oluf died in 1387, his mother, the Danish Princess

* Numbers in the right margin indicate pagination in the original text.

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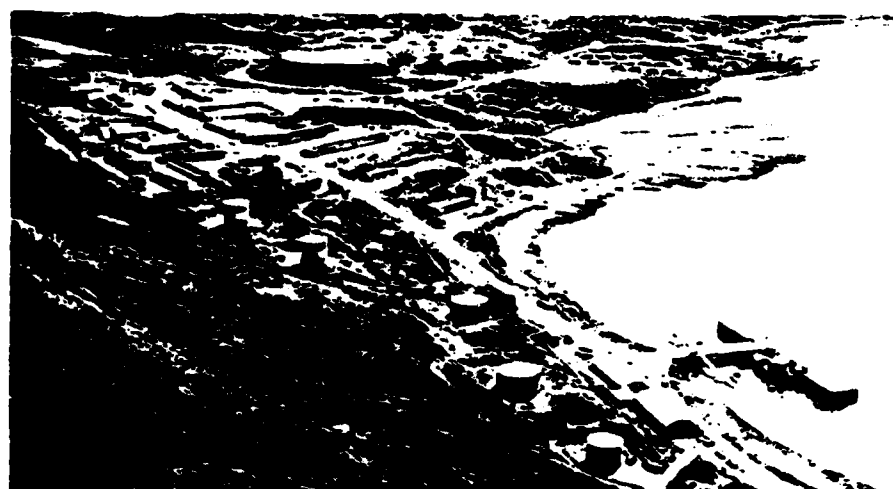
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The main base Grønnedal.

The Napoleonic Wars interrupted the further expansion. They also caused the decline of the Danish-Norwegian monarchy. In the Kiel peace treaty of 1814 Norway was ceded to Sweden. The original Norwegian possessions in the North Atlantic however remained with Denmark. /501

In the nineteenth century the previously unknown parts of Greenland were explored. British and American expeditions (Ross, Parry, Inglefield, Kane, Hayes, Hall, Nares) penetrated to the north.

In 1900 Robert Peary finally reached Cape Bridgeman on the northeast coast. The southeast coast was explored for the first time by Danish naval officers, who penetrated into the unknown areas either with Eskimo umiaks (Graah, Gustav Holm), in rowboats (Amstrup) or finally with a steamship (Ryder).

Further to the north the second German North Pole expedition (led by Koldewey and Payer) reached Germania Land (77° N) in 1870. The Duke of Orléans traveled the waters to a latitude of 78° N to the Ile de France. The Danish expedition under the leadership of the unfortunate Mylius Erichsen finally succeeded in reaching Peary Land (1907) on the coast of Germania Land. In this manner the cartographic survey of the entire Greenland coast could be completed.

But not only the nations cited, but other nations as well participated in the exploration of Greenland; many conducted whaling and sealing and fishing in the coastal waters. Danish sovereignty remained unchallenged. In 1916 Denmark sold the West Indian Virgin Islands to the USA. A part of the treaty of sale consisted of the American recognition of Danish sovereignty over all of Greenland.

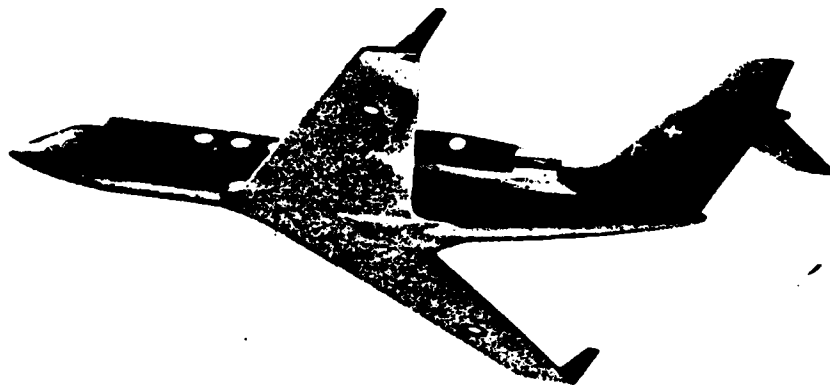
In 1931 a Norwegian whaler without the authorization of the Norwegian government took possession of the Greenland coast between $71^{\circ} 30'$ N and $75^{\circ} 40'$ in the name of His Majesty the King Hakon*. Under pressure of

* King Hakon was a brother of Christian X of Denmark.

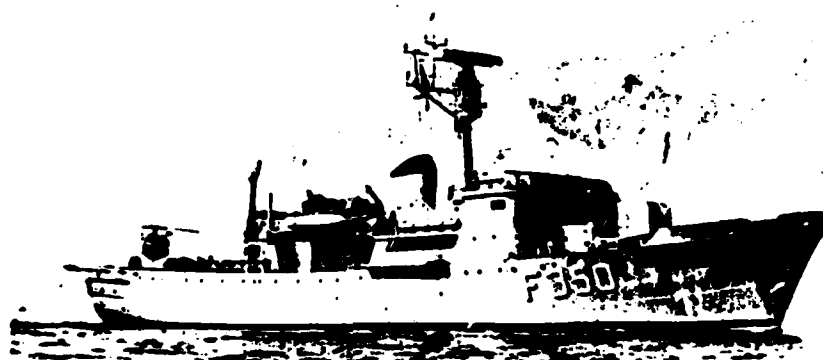
public opinion the Norwegian government accepted the occupation although with some hesitation.

Denmark made complaint to the International Court in The Hague, which resolved the controversy in 1933 by confirming Danish sovereignty over the entire island of Greenland. Therefore, only 75 years have passed since the geographic survey of Greenland has been completed, and it is only 50 years since Danish sovereignty was universally recognized.

For over 200 years after Hans Egede had put foot on Greenland, a policy of strict isolation of the island from the outside was prosecuted. The conduct of commerce was the monopoly of the Royal Greenland Trading Company, which ruled Greenland - until WWII - in effect without interference of the Danish Parliament. The objective of the policy which was prosecuted in this manner was less the exploration of the natural resources of the country and more the protection of the Greenland culture and the improvement and stabilization of the living conditions. This occurred inter al. by the fact that for Greenland exports, regardless of the fluctuation of the market price, rather stable prices were paid and imports were restricted to "good and useful" goods.



One of the Gulfstream III aircraft used for liaison tasks.



One of the four fishery protection frigates of the HVIDBJØRNEN Class, which were built between 1961 - 1963. With an operational displacement of 1,650 tons they are equipped with one 76 mm gun and with a LYNX helicopter, which can be kept in a hangar. The crew is 73 men. Here the third ship of the Class INGOLF (F350) in Greenland waters.

The contacts with the outside world were subject to strict scrutiny. /504 Non-Greenland fishers - primarily coming from the Faroe Islands - had access only to four bases with fish-processing factories, which had been especially for them. One of these bases, Faerringhavn, is still in use today.

Since the middle of the nineteenth century the indigenous population has gradually been gaining more influence upon the affairs of their island; otherwise administration was provided by the Colonial Office in Copenhagen. Until WWII there was neither a local central administration of the government nor a council including the entire country in Greenland. Greenlanders could not be found in the Danish Parliament.

After Denmark had been occupied in WWII by the Germans, Danish authorities in Greenland asked the USA for assistance. The activity of the Americans after the request for assistance released the country from its isolation and brought the indigenous population into contact with technical availabilities and life styles which they had not previously known.

This new information and perceptions resulted after the war in the fact that any attempt to return Greenland to the old reactionary colonial conditions would have to fail. In 1948 the Danish Minister President travelled through Greenland in order to obtain an idea of the aspirations of the indigenous population. The speaker of the Greenland population expressed the desire for a policy of open borders and pleaded for the establishment of a local central administration provided with greater authority.

Denmark granted these requests. In 1953 the Danish constitution was modified; Greenland received the status of a Danish province with two seats in Parliament. The local government agencies were expanded and intensive efforts were made to promote education and health, house construction, communications and traffic and trade and industry, particularly fishing.

The prerequisite for this development was that the numerically small population - 23,000 inhabitants in 1953 - left their small widely scattered settlements and moved to a few locations which were expanded for the purpose. The construction and the management of the newly developed facilities for the purpose had to be performed almost exclusively by Danes, because only few Greenlanders had the necessary know-how.

Therefore the Greenlanders were more or less reduced to the role of spectators in the transformation of their country. Therefore they were condemned to unemployment or use as menial workers, felt that they had been ignored, saw their traditional values and customs being deteriorated... All of this resulted in a feeling of bitter disappointment. Extensive alcoholism, high suicide rates and vandalism were the result. Despite the good intentions and the considerable investments to be financed by the Danish taxpayers, in the final analysis the embitterment and the resentment against the Danes increased. Unfortunately nothing in this situation has changed to date*.

* On the other hand, the health situation and the standard of living have been considerably improved. As recently as 1950 the average life expectancy was approximately 35 years; now it is 62 years.

In a referendum in 1972 two-thirds of the Danish population voted for entry into the European Common Market. In Greenland the vote was 2.5 : 1 against entry into the ECM, but since Greenland is an integral part of the Danish state, it had to accept the majority vote*.

* Only 56% of the voters voted.

This event strengthened the feeling of the Greenlanders that they were being dominated by their former colonial masters. Although Greenland was a province with equal rights, in regard to culture, language, history as well as to the living standards and the occupational and job structure there were very great differences as compared to the rest of Denmark. In addition, "communications" - in every possible sense of the word - between Denmark and Greenland were restricted and cumbersome.

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The Greenlanders therefore requested a modification of the constitution, which would accord them more influence over their own affairs. After several years of negotiations as of 1. April 1979 home rule was introduced. In 1982 there was another referendum in Greenland in regard to ECM-entry. This time the pro- and anti- votes were almost equal, but the majority was still opposed to ECM-membership*. Therefore the

* 11,180 votes for remaining in the ECM, 12,615 votes against.

Danish government is currently negotiating for the exit of Greenland from the European Common Market (ECM).

THE GREENLAND GOVERNMENT

The Greenland government - Landsstyret - consists of the chairman and four members. The parliament - Landstindet - has 26 representatives. It exercises legislative power in certain areas, such as for example in taxation, in the cultural area, in social welfare and in occupational training.

Naturally, it is difficult to compare Greenland political parties with Danish political parties. But the following can be said: the largest party - Atassut - can be regarded as being Social-Democrat. The government party - Siumut - is a leftist party, which works together with Danish Socialist party. Siumut and Atassut each have 12 seats in parliament, but Siumut is supported by a radical left-wing group, which has two seats. This party is both very nationalistic and has as its ultimate objective the complete independence of Greenland.

The "High Commissioner" - Rigsombudsmand - represents the Danish government and is responsible for all areas not assigned to Greenland home rule. Foreign relations and defense are the prerogative of the Danish government and of the Danish parliament. The armed forces stationed in Greenland are subject neither to the Rigsombudsmand or the local home-rule agencies.

GEOGRAPHY

With 2,175,600 square kilometers area Greenland is the largest island in the world. It is separated from Canada by the narrow Nares Strait, which at the narrowest point is only 14 sea miles wide. The north-south extension is 1,440 sea miles, the width of the island from west to east is approximately 570 sea miles. The entire area of Greenland is extremely mountainous. In regard to accessibility and trafficability the country is divided into a number of "islands", which can maintain contact with each other by ship and aircraft (helicopters) and - in winter - by ice sleds.

CLIMATE

There is an Arctic climate in Greenland; however, from north to south there are considerable variations. The average temperature in the north is 16° Celsius, in the south ca. 0°. In the north the temperature can fall to -70° Celsius, and in the south it can rise to +20°.

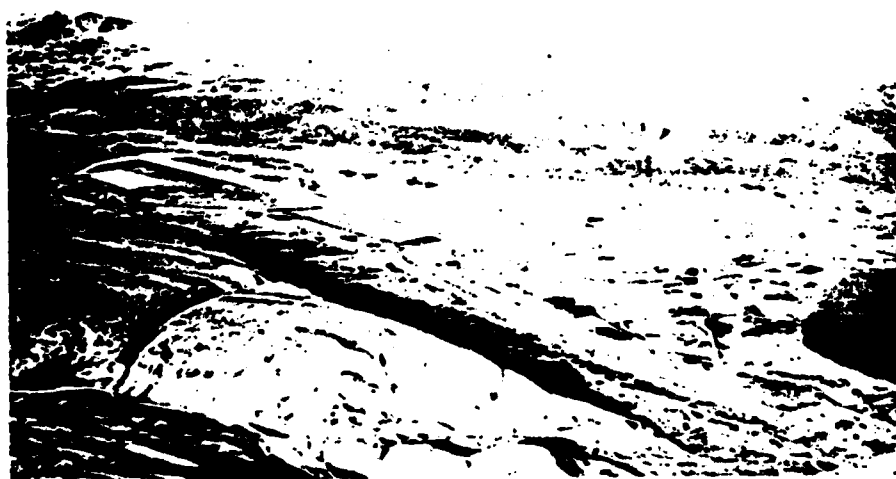
The amount of precipitation in Peary Land reaches only 200 mm, whereas at Cape Farewell it reaches 3,000 mm. The wind velocities are usually high; together with low temperatures they can cause dangerous ship icing. Hurricanes, fog and snowstorms often affect air travel.

In recent years the ice cap has been explored in its total depth. Because of this it has become possible to determine the temperature variations and fluctuations of Greenland over several thousand years. The research data indicate that the current climate is unusually warm, much warmer than at the time of the first settlement by Scandinavians 1,000 years ago. Knowledge of the weather situation in Greenland is very important for European weather prediction. Because of the high costs which apply for manned weather stations in very distant sites in the Arctic, the Danish Meteorological Institute has begun to cover the entire coast of Greenland with a network of automatic weather stations*.

* Currently (spring 1983) 14 stations have been installed. The observation figures are transmitted to Europe, usually by satellite.

ICE CONDITIONS

In the fjords and on the coasts ice is formed because of the low winter temperatures. In addition, masses of ice move from the polar cap with the East Greenland Current down the east coast, go around Cape Farewell and then drift along the west coast. This ice - which consists of icebergs and large ice floes - is combined with similar ice configurations, which derive from the numerous glaciers. It can inhibit shipping for the entire summer, i.e., up to August.



Air photo of Thule AFB.

POPULATION

Since the end of WWII the population has doubled to a current 51,000 inhabitants. 42,000 of the inhabitants were born in Greenland, the rest primarily in Denmark. The population is located in 18 cities and 100 smaller sites. The number of inhabitants of the "cities" is between 500 and 10,000; the largest city is the capital Godthåb or Nuuk. /505

INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNICATIONS

Since the decision was made to open up the country, the infrastructure has been improved considerably, during the last ten years also with European Common Market assistance. At most places there is now electricity and piped water. The harbor facilities have been expanded. Two airports - Søndre Strømfjord and Narsarsuag - are available for international air travel. There are also airstrips in Godthåb/Nuuk, Kulusuk, Mestervig and Nord. There are helipads in all cities. The Greenland airline company provides for internal air services with helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft; it also operates an airline to Canada. Coastal steamers travel between the cities and settlements.

A short-wave radio net, which is satellite-supported, covers the west coast from the southern tip to Disko Bay and provides radio communications between all parts of the country and between Greenland and Denmark. Radio transmissions can be received in almost all parts of the country; television is also available in many settlements and cities.



The second ship of the HVIDBJØRNEN Class, the VAEDDEREN (F349), on patrol off the Greenland coast.

THE NATURAL RESOURCES OF GREENLAND, OCCUPATIONS

From time immemorial the Eskimos have lived from hunting, particularly seals, but also including whales, polar bears, foxes, reindeer and wild birds. With the decline of the seal population, which began in 1920, and with the increase and settlement of Greenland population at fewer locations, seal hunting is the main source of income for only approximately 2,500 inhabitants (including family members) in the sparsely inhabited areas in the north and on the east coast. Hunting is an additional source of income for many others..

The principal occupation is currently fishing, from which 10,000 to 20,000 people live. Cod is the primary commercial fish, but apparently the survival conditions for these fish are critical. A slight reduction of the water temperature frustrated hopes for a further expansion of the cod fishing in the Disko Bay. Fortunately, a shift could be made to shrimp fishing.

Fishing is however generally inhibited by ice, particularly on the southern west coast. In 1982/83 the fish-processing factories suffered considerably for a rather long time because of inadequate deliveries of fish; the results were unemployment and economic depression.

In the south sheep breeding plays an important role, but the costs are high and the severe winters sometimes decimate the herds. Approximately 300 to 400 people live from this occupation.

MINERAL RESOURCES

The mining of cryolite (Greenland spar) began already in the middle of the nineteenth century at Ivigtut*. The mine there is now

* The first cryolite finds were made by the German geologist K.L. Giesecke, who travelled in Greenland from 1806 to 1813.

exhausted, but provided a very good yield for years. Cryolite, which plays a role in the production of aluminum, was of very great importance particularly in WWII: with the export profits all public expenses could be covered during the period of separation from the motherland.

The only other profitable mining operation is the lead and zinc mine on Mamorrilik*. It began operation in 1973. Of its ca. 310 workers

* In the vicinity of Umanaq. The German polar explorer Alfred Wegener climbed the highest point of the ice plateau in the vicinity of Mamorrilik in 1930. In the following year he perished in a snowstorm.

In the vicinity of Narssag a uranium deposit was discovered. The uranium density is low and a special process is required to extract the metal. A sample of the ore was sent to Denmark for further analysis. The decision to initiate mining the uranium is still pending.

In the mid-1970's various private firms tried oil exploration in the Davis Channel, but did not experience any success. Recently, a search for oil began in Jamesonland on the east coast. Geological surveys have been conducted in numerous areas and minerals have been located. In general, however, mining is very difficult and expensive, specifically because of the difficult access to the mineral lodes and because of the unfavourable climate, the ice conditions and the only short navigation season in many areas.

The Greenlanders are fully aware of these environmental problems in regard to ore and oil exploration. The social consequences of the short-term, hectic appearance of foreign workers in the sparsely populated country also caused problems.

ACTIVITY IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

There is a number of private firms in Greenland, but from the beginning the percentage of the public authorities in construction, trade and transportation, social programs, schools, hospitals and in administration has always been relatively great. Most Greenlanders earn their living from such activities.

THE ECONOMY

Clima, geography, limited resources and a general level of education, /506 which does not yet correspond to that of a fully developed country and a population explosion which recently occurred preclude the economic self-sufficiency of the country. Greenland is therefore compelled to seek outside assistance, which primarily comes from Greenland. The net expenses of the government were in 1982 approximately 2 billion Danish kroner, of which 124 million were provided by the European Common Market (ECM). The Danish government has made its position clear to the Greenlanders that it will not compensate for the elimination of the ECM-subvention monies, which results from the exit of Greenland from the ECM. Although the subvention provided by the ECM may appear to be relatively low, in the course of the years it amounts to a sum which is approximately 50% of the value of the principal industry, the fishing industry.

THE DANISH MILITARY ACTIVITY IN GREENLAND PRIOR TO WWII

Danish armed forces have never been employed against the Greenland civilian population. Quite the contrary is the case: when shots were fired at all, then they were fired in defense of the civilian population. Originally protection against whalers and foreign fishers and the general support of the population was vested in the Danish Navy. An organized fishery protection service was established in the 1880's. At the same time the surveillance of the Greenland waters became an institution which has continued until today.

Between 1920 and 1940 there were Danish naval vessels in Greenland waters during the summer. Since the 1920's the Danish Geodetic Institute has been prosecuting a topographic survey. After 1932 Danish Heinkel amphibious aircraft were used for photogrammetric survey operations.

Since Danish naval vessels were stationed in Greenland only during the summer, there were no units there when the Germans occupied Denmark in April 1940.

WORLD WAR II

Immediately after the German occupation, the Danish ambassador in Washington stated in an announcement that he would represent the Danish interests. i.e., he announced that he would take measures in the true interests of Denmark without reference to government orders from Copenhagen, which might have been issued under German pressure.

The two governors and the two regional councils of Greenland accepted this position of the ambassador in a joint meeting. The governors immediately exercised their expanded authority, which had been provided according to law in the event of interruption of contact with the motherland. One of the two governors transferred his office to New York, where he developed a liaison staff; his colleague established a central administration in Godthåb.

As a neutral country the USA exercised a large degree of discretion in regard to military matters. On the other hand, Greenland belonged to the American continent, i.e., it was included in the area of applicability of the Monroe Doctrine. In addition, the foreign ministers of the American Republics had made the decision during the Inter-American Conference in Havana in 1940 not to tolerate any change of sovereignty rights of European possessions in the Western Hemisphere. Because of this, perhaps the intentions of Canada to occupy Greenland in the interest of Great Britain were frustrated*.

* Iceland and the Faroe Islands were occupied by the British after the German invasion of Denmark.

Originally, units of the U.S. Coast Guard were used to patrol the Greenland waters. The Greenlanders received assistance and supplies from the Red Cross. With the consent of the Greenland central administration or government the Danish ambassador Kaufmann signed a treaty with the USA, according to which the USA could establish military bases in Greenland. On the basis of this treaty several airfields - the most important were Nadarsuag and Søndre Strømfjord -, weather stations, radio and radio navigation stations were established on both coasts of Greenland.

These various US installations played an important role in the war. As intermediate landing fields for refueling the airfields made it possible for the aircraft to fly over the Atlantic and wide areas of the North Atlantic so that these areas of the ocean, which previously could not be reached from other bases, could be patrolled.

Ships could refuel at the naval base at Grønnedal.

GERMAN ATTEMPTS TO ESTABLISH WEATHER STATIONS IN GREENLAND

The weather observation stations in the barren North-East of Greenland were manned by Danish trappers and members of scientific expeditions, who had spent the winter of 1939/40 there. This group of civilians received military status and the designation "North-East Greenland Sledge Patrol."

The interest of the Germans in weather stations in Greenland was naturally not less than that of the Allies. German weather observation teams were infiltrated as "Norwegian Rescue Expedition" in the summer of 1940 unto the area of Kaiser-Franz-Josef and Kong-Oscar Fjords. However, they are quickly captured by a frigate of the Free Norwegian Forces under British command.

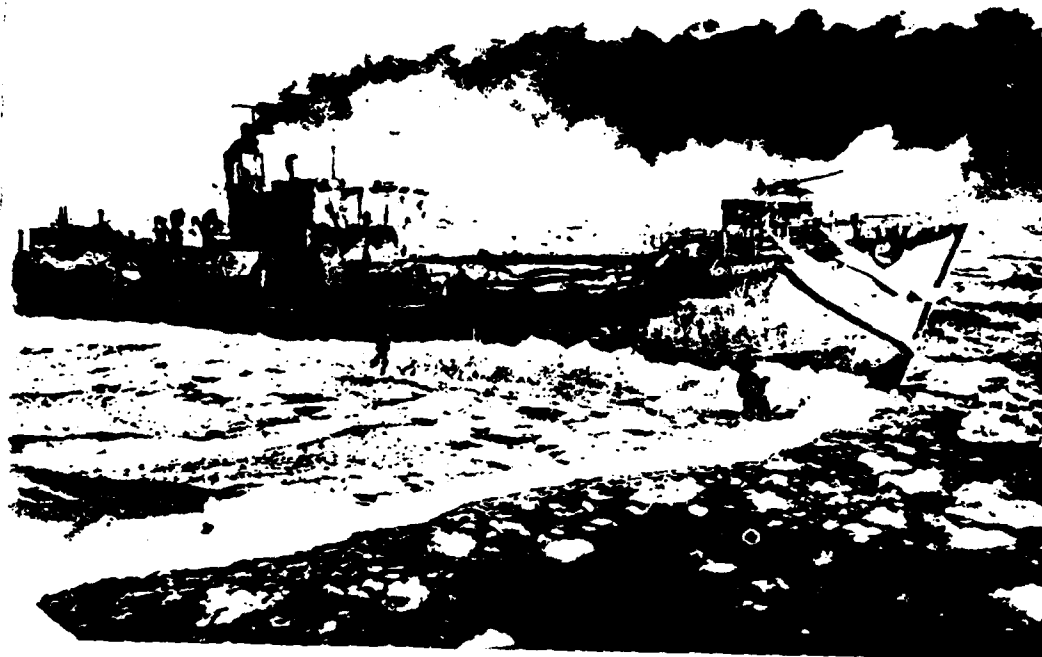
In 1941 new German efforts were made to land weather observers from a Norwegian sealing ship. The "Sledge Patrol" mentioned above sighted the ship and informed US agencies. A ship of the Coast Guard captured the sealing ship and a team which had already been landed*. In each of

* It was revealed that the Captain of the whaler (BUSKO) was the Norwegian Hallvard Devold, who ten years before had claimed Greenland in the name of Norway.

of the following years German parties established weather stations - in 1942, 1943 and 1944 - on the East Coast, approximately at latitude 75° N.

The SACHSEN spent the winter of 30.8.42 to 13.3.43 in the vicinity of Sabine Island. The ship was discovered by the Sledge Patrol and was immediately attacked/ US-aircraft then bombed the ship, so that the crew scuttled it. The surviving Germans were evacuated by a German JU-290 aircraft in the middle of June 1943.

The COBURG reached pack ice at the beginning of September 1943 at 77° N and then came to the vicinity of Shannon Island, where it sent weather signals until the end of February 1944, before the station had to be moved. After fighting off an Allied patrol in April 1944, the crew was then evacuated by aircraft in June. In September 1944 the KEHDINGEN was captured by USCGS NORTHWIND, before it could land its weather team. A month later the trawler EXTERNSTEINE landed an observation team at Little Koldewey. The team was discovered the next day and captured, and the ship was captured by the armed icebreaker USCGS SOUTHWIND. This was apparently the last German attempt to land weather observers in Greenland.



German trawler EXTERNSTEIN captured by USCGS SOUTHWIND



Two trawler-type patrol ships. AGDLEK and AGDA were built in 1974 to patrol the coasts of Greenland. A third unit, which was built at the Svendborg-Vaerft, the TULUGAL (Y388) was commissioned in 1979 and with 30-ton displacement is 10% larger than the two sister ships. The ships are propelled by a Burmeister- and Wain-Alpha diesel and are armed with two 20 mm guns.

ACTIVITY OF US FORCES AFTER THE END OF THE WAR

After the end of WWII a permanent Danish naval base was established in Greenland. Denmark took over other American installations. The American forces were considerably reduced. However, because of the rapidly deteriorating relations between the former Allies in East and West, the Americans did not want to give up all of their bases immediately. The problem was finally resolved by the fact that the USA and Denmark became NATO-partners. A new treaty in 1951 gave both countries the right to establish Danish-American defense areas. /507

In the same year the Danish Navy took over the naval base Grønnedal, which since then has been the headquarters of the Island Commander Greenland.

In 1950 the nuclear deterrent capability of NATO depended almost completely upon the manned SAC-bombers. Since at this time aircraft from USA-bases could not reach any targets in the Soviet Union and since Greenland is on the orthodrome between the two superpowers, the need for airbases in the Arctic was very apparent.

Because of this the Thule airbase was established, an impressive technical accomplishment*. The airbase began operation in 1952

* The airfields on the East Coast had only a sand surface. The runways are 1,200 to 2,400 meters long. They are operated all year long by very few ground and service personnel.

and services both bombers and tanker aircraft.

Rapid technical progress had as a result that the logistics for the bombers which had only a rather limited range soon lost much of its importance as compared to a new primary mission of building an early warning system against missiles attacking from the USSR. In 1960 three large early warning stations were built, one in Alaska, a second in Great Britain and a third in Thule. Thereby the role of Thule was changed; it was no longer a base for offensive operations, but an early warning center. The operations personnel in Thule, who had previously been 12,000 to 13,000 men, today is correspondingly only a tenth of that number.

In order to obtain early warning data of an attack by manned bombers on the American continent, in 1958 the so called Distant Early Warning Line was built above the polar basin, which extends from Northern Alaska to the Greenland East Coast. One station is at Holsteinborg, two on the arctic icecap and one in Kulusuk at Ammassalik.

Logistically the stations are supplied by the now Danish-American defense zone Søndre Strøm fjord, whose operating personnel are smaller in number than that at Thule. Søndre Strømfjord is used by civilian airlines and is the main access point to Greenland.

The airbase Barsarsuag in the first years after its establishment was an intermediate airfield of NATO for the transfer of US combat aircraft to the European NATO states. In 1958 it was given to Denmark and is now used as a civilian airport. Coincidentally it is headquarters for the Danish Ice Patrol Service.

THE ACTIVITY OF THE DANISH ARMED FORCES IN GREENLAND

Although after WWII a permanent headquarters of the Danish Armed Forces was established in Greenland, the Danish military presence was weak. The Danish Navy had a few small patrol ships there (ca. 100 tons), which were permanently stationed there. In the summer a hydrographic ship or an ex-British frigate could also be stationed there.

In 1947 several CATALINA flying boats were put into service; they were used for reconnaissance, transport and surveillance tasks all over Greenland and performed very well. In 1970 four-motor C-54's replaced the CATALINA's; the replacement for the C-54's was later the C-140 HERCULES aircraft. Since 1982 the Greenland Command has had one GULFSTREAM III jet aircraft, which is stationed in Søndre Strømfjord.

The Northeast Greenland Sledge Patrol experienced reactivation in 1950 and now has the designation "Sirius"; it has its command post in Daneborg (74° N) and patrols the area between Kong Oscars Fjord in the South up to the Nares Strait in the North-East. During the summer the patrol uses boats and aircraft, during which period they establish depots and repairs posts (huts), which are often visited and damaged by polar bears. In winter the patrols which consist of two men with 20 dogs use sledges.

In January 1959 the passenger ship HANS HEDTOFT collided with an iceberg south of Cape Farwell on its maiden voyage and sank. None of the 95 persons on board could be rescued. One year later in April 1960 the freighter HANNE 5 was lost in the same area; the entire 18-man crew lost their lives.

The sea accidents illuminated grotesquely the fact that the Greenland Command had no appropriate rescue resources available. After the first disaster in 1959 a Permanent Ice Rescue Service was established in Narsarsuaq. The service, which for a period of time was performed by military aircraft, is now under the direction of extension office of the Meteorological Office and uses civilian charter aircraft..

As a collateral result of the maritime accidents it can also be noted that since the beginning of the 1960's a series of large fishery protection ships and maritime rescue ships have been built, which carry helicopters.

Currently the Island Commander Greenland has the following units available:

1 - 2 units of the frigate type (1,500 to 1,800 tons), of which each carries a LYNX helicopter.

2 - 3 patrol ships (320 tons).

1 GULFSTREAM aircraft, stationed at Søndre Strømfjord, the sledge patrol group Sirius.

As previously mentioned, the command post of the Island Commander Greenland located at the Grønnedal naval base, which to a limited extent supplies the ships with the resources of the base.

There are Danish liaison officers at the two Danish-American defense commands in Thule and Søndre Strømfjord.

MISSIONS

Within the NATO command structure the Island Commander Greenland reports to CINCPACFLT. It is apparent that in regard to the huge area to be patrolled with the few and weak forces - without external foreign assistance - a credible military effect could not be realized, with the exception of surveillance and support missions for shipping and fishing and rescue operations.

In regard to the internal Danish command system, the Chief of the Greenland Command reports directly to the Danish Minister of Defense. The primary missions which are incumbent upon him are described as follows:

□ Fishery Surveillance. This is the most demanding task, particularly after expansion of the fishing limit to 200 sea miles since 1977.

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□ Search And Rescue Operations (SAR): The Greenland Command has the responsibility for SAR in the sea with the exception of the fjord and archipelago areas, where the local police is responsible. The air rescue service in accordance with a Danish-American government agreement is the responsibility of the US forces. However, independently of the formal division of the responsibilities, of course Danish sea and air forces cooperate in actual rescue operations.

The Greenland Command, the coastal radio station and the police cooperate closely within the parameters of a ship traffic reporting system, which was developed in order to be able to observe the entire ship traffic; the coastal stations and the police are in this regard primarily concerned with the coastal traffic, while the Greenland Command is primarily concerned with the high seas shipping traffic.

□ Additional Missions

Ships, aircraft and patrols a whole series of additional missions which are difficult to define in detail, for example, surveillance tasks, support of scientific activities, liaison tasks with US Forces and similar tasks.

THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF GREENLAND

In Greenland to date scarcely any national resources have been discovered, which on the basis of quality, quantity or exploitability could be strategically important, insofar as energy sources, minerals or food sources are concerned. The strategic value of the island is based upon its geographic position. Certainly Greenland is extraordinarily well situated for installation of early warning stations against attacks launched over the polar region. As already described, the USA has fully appreciated this and have established appropriate installations.

In order to measure the strategic value of Greenland, it only has to be imagined that the island would be in the possession of the Soviets. The pre-warning time for the USA would be dramatically abbreviated. If in addition to this the Soviets could operate from bases on the East Coast and from Svalbard, the Soviet sea and air forces would be much better positioned and able to threaten and keep under surveillance NATO forces in Iceland, in the Greenland and Norwegian Sea. At the same time, they would facilitate the protection of the bases of the Soviet Northern Fleet. I refer it to the imagination of the reader to estimate what the results of a sea battle in the North Atlantic would be under such auspices.

In my opinion such a threat of the North Atlantic critical communications lines would generate a dissolution of NATO, since the Europeans could no longer depend upon the great American nation's being able to help them in times of need.

THE THREAT

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In the book published by him "Grønland, Middelhavets Perle" (Greenland, The Pearl of The Mediterranean), Paul Claesson, a Swedish so called peace researcher, states that the American early warning stations on Greenland would have to assumed a preferred place on the nuclear attack target list and that therefore these stations are a severe threat for all Greenlanders. Unfortunately, this assertion is largely accepted uncritically, although it is logically spurious.



A LYNX helicopter, which are carried in the Danish fishery protection frigates of the GVIDBJØRNEN Class. An improved type was built 1974-1976 at the Aalborg-Vaerft: Beskytteren (Fishery Protection Ship) (F340)
All photos: Royal Danish Navy

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The US-stations were established in order to provide warning against a Soviet surprise attack. An attack - particularly with nuclear weapons - against the early warning stations prior to a general attack on the USA would of course be just as effective as a warning as a radar observation of the early warning stations and an attack against these stations after a general attack would be pointless.

A strategy for obtaining airfields on the East Coast of Greenland would make more sense. Certainly, the imbalance which is becoming progressively more apparent between the Western and Soviet naval forces - if nothing is done to counteract this - makes a Soviet seizure of the isolated, undefended airfields in Nord, Mestervig and even Kulusuk appear possible; However, even then, the ice conditions and the climate would be disadvantages which would be difficult for the air and sea transports to overcome, which would be necessary, in order to expand the runways to operational air bases.

The actual danger appears to be in the possibility of political subversion. If the reader considers the discussions presented previously about the Greenland social conditions, he will be aware of the fact that this is a population with little experience with history and foreign policy, which has never had to wage war and which has never experienced the heavy hand of dictators.

There is practically no objectively founded discussion of defense politics and the assertions of a book, such as that mentioned above, are accepted without critical examination. The contact of Greenland to the outside world consisted primarily of that to a well intended benevolent colonial power; nevertheless, an anti-Danish attitude is widely proliferated. The economic situation is uncertain and depends

primarily upon Danish money subsidies. Despite this, Greenland has decided to leave the European Common Market (ECM) and to dispense with the assistance deriving from the ECM. It should be noted however in general that Greenland has developed rather quickly in the last 30 - 40 years, a situation which has generated many social problems, and the country has however coincidentally been transformed into a welfare state, whose people expect and demand a constant improvement of their situation and increase of their standard of living.

If therefore the support from the outside - primarily therefore Danish payments - should cease in the current or even increased extent, it would be possible to expect social protests and a growing tendency for a separation from Denmark and association with a powerful country on the other side of the pole, which might be very willing to pay a price in order to win political influence, as it has already done in the case of other former colonies.

Fortunately it has apparently not yet gone so far. Leading politicians and well-informed Greenlanders have probably recognized that an association with Denmark serves the interests of Greenland best in the long term. To date, Denmark despite its own economic problems has borne the financial burden of the support of Greenland. Not everybody in the West understands that this financial sacrifice of Denmark is a critical factor for the safety and security of the West.

The Danish Armed Forces from a strictly military perspective weight little in the balance, but their presence emphasizes the Danish sovereignty and the solidarity with Greenland. They protect the natural resources of Greenlanders, and they assist them in overcoming the difficult climatic conditions. They tie bonds closer which bind Denmark and Greenland.

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